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The Washington Merry-Go-Round

Repression Continuing in Chile

By Jack Anderson
and Les Whitten

Back in 1972, we exposed how International Telephone and Telegraph plotted against any government that dared to oppose the conglomerate's financial interests.

There had been talk in Argentina, for example, of nationalizing the ITT telephone system. The company immediately tried to stir up a revolution.

In 1968, the governor of Puerto Rico considered taking over ITT's profitable but poorly serviced telephone company. ITT threw its resources against the governor, who was defeated at the polls.

In 1970, the Marxist Salvador Allende, campaigning on a platform of nationalization, won Chile's presidential election. Without waiting to see whether he would be able to keep his promises, ITT tried to stop him from taking power.

ITT owned 60 per cent of the Chilean telephone company and intended to keep it. On Oct. 23, 1970, ITT's Washington vice president, William Merriam, sent a message to Henry A. Kissinger in the White House. It was a stilted, rather ungraceful demand for tough

American action to stop Allende.

Kissinger endorsed a CIA-ITT conspiracy to block Allende from becoming president. When this failed, the CIA began to undermine the new Allende regime. The idea was to set him up for a fall.

The CIA spent an admitted \$8 million on the anti-Allende campaign. This helped to bring Allende's subsequent downfall. For their money, the American taxpayers now have, as an ally, a military dictatorship far more oppressive than the Allende government ever was.

Since we have a proprietary interest in the story, we have continued to keep an eye on Chile. We have reported how the Chilean junta first turned upon the Communists and leftists, then upon democratic leaders. We have also told how the junta tortures political prisoners and burns books.

The dictatorship has responded by sending representatives to Washington to assure U.S. officials that the repression is over and that human rights are now respected in Chile.

The ugly truth is, however, that the junta not only has renewed its repression of Allende's associates but of religious leaders and democratic politicians as well.

At this moment, for example, the Chilean navy is preparing three secret trials of about 100 political prisoners in the port city of Valparaiso.

Ten prominent Chileans will be charged, according to smuggled documentation, with "collaborating and participating in an illegal government." Yet it is the junta that is illegal; the Allende government was legally elected and illegally deposed. Thus the prisoners are being tried for a crime that was actually committed by their accusers.

Among those who will be hauled before the junta's kangaroo court are the following:

—Pedro Felipe Ramirez, 34, Housing Minister under Allende and son-in-law of Radomiro Tomic, the Christian Democrat who ran against Allende in 1970. Ramirez was among those released by the junta with great fanfare a month ago, as part of its second anniversary celebration. Minutes after Ramirez walked through the prison doors, he was rearrested by navy agents.

—Andres Sepulveda, about 50, former congressman and Socialist Party leader. He was arrested after the coup, released on Sept. 20 and rearrested five days later.

—Sergio Vuskovic, 49, former mayor of Valparaiso and professor of philosophy. He also was arrested after the

coup, released about Sept. 15 and rearrested five days later.

—Luis Corvalan, 56, former senator and acknowledged Communist. Although suffering from a bleeding ulcer and a serious spinal disorder, he has spent the last two years in prison.

The second secret navy trial, also in the works, will bring about 55 political prisoners before the bar on charges of illegal arms importation during the Allende years.

The third secret trial will take up vague charges of "treason" against a number of other prisoners.

No one is immune, it seems, from the junta's paranoiac purge of dissenters. Last month, the military dictators zeroed in on a private church group, known as the "Committee for Cooperation and Peace," which has been trying to keep track of the thousands of imprisoned Chileans.

Footnote: At the urging of the Chile Solidarity Committee, a District of Columbia group pushing for human rights in Chile, several members of Congress have written to junta leader Gen. Augusto Pinochet demanding that the secret trials be stopped. Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) has also asked the State Department to issue a formal protest over the Frenz expulsion. The Chilean embassy had no comment.

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